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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing below of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application:

Listing of Claims:


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Claim 1 (currently amended): ~~An~~ A clutch actuator for actuating an automatic clutch or an automatic transmission, said actuator comprising: a housing that includes an axially-extending first receptacle; a toothed rack slidably received within the first receptacle for linear movement along a rack longitudinal axis; a second receptacle adjacent to the first receptacle and within which second receptacle a gear is rotatably carried, wherein a portion of the second receptacle intersects a portion of the first receptacle to define a space that is common to both the first receptacle and the second receptacle, wherein the gear is in meshing engagement with the toothed rack for linearly moving the toothed rack within the first receptacle; and an electric motor drivingly connected with the gear, wherein the electric motor and the gear are provided as a pre-assembled unit that is removably connected with the housing.

Claim 2 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, wherein the toothed rack is substantially cylindrical, and the first receptacle is substantially a hollow cylinder.

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Claim 3 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, including an energy accumulator positioned between and in contact with the toothed rack and the housing, and wherein the toothed rack is movable in a first direction of movement that is opposite to a force imposed on the toothed rack by the energy accumulator, and is movable in a second direction by the force of the energy accumulator.

Claim 4 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 3 wherein the energy accumulator contacts the toothed rack at a first protrusion extending outwardly from the toothed rack.

 Claim 5 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first protrusion is a protruding ring.

Claim 6 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first protrusion is integrally formed with the toothed rack.

Claim 7 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 3, wherein the energy accumulator contacts the housing at an inwardly-extending second protrusion within the housing.

Claim 8 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 7, wherein the second protrusion is a protruding ring.

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Claim 9 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 7, wherein the second protrusion is integrally formed with the housing.

Claim 10 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first protrusion is connected by one of an interlocking, a frictional locking, a force locking, or a material locking connection.

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Claim 11 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, wherein the toothed rack is axially slidably received within the first receptacle.

Claim 12 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, wherein the toothed rack is supported in bearings carried adjacent end areas of the first receptacle.

Claim 13 (original): An actuator as claimed in claim 12, wherein the bearings are journal bearings that are carried by the first receptacle.

Claim 14 (previously presented): An actuator as claimed in claim 13, wherein one of the journal bearings defines a stop for an energy accumulator within the housing.

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Claim 15 (previously presented): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, wherein the electric motor includes a rotatable drive shaft that has a longitudinal axis that is substantially parallel to the longitudinal axis of the toothed rack.

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Claim 16 (previously presented): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, wherein the gear is a spur gear.

Claim 17 (currently amended): An actuator as claimed in claim 1, including a ~~transmission~~ gear drive system operatively connected between the electric motor and the gear for transmitting rotational movement between the motor and the gear.
